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State Appropriations Budget Hearings
HB No. 6392

My name is Linda Lentini and I support a large part of the DMHAS budget, the respect that you have given people with disabilities is evident in the lack of cuts to services that are desperately needed.

One area of concern that I have is the amount of money that is spent on rehabilitation services for problem gambling. The budget calls to maintain the current funding and I feel that this is not enough. Gambling in any form is addictive in nature, we cannot keep rehabilitation services at status quo as more, and more people lose their lives because of this addiction.

Advertisements such as "You can't win if you don't play" reach everyone and are very powerful ads. These ads target a large audience from the very young to the very old. My son who is 8 years old says that when he views a commercial about scratch off tickets, "Mom, you have to try this scratch off if you want to win some money!" Hopefully with education my son will understand that gambling is not easy money, it is an addiction that can destroy lives if it is given the agent, the host and the environment. Many years ago tobacco and alcohol companies were allowed to advertise as much as the CT lottery and the casino do today and look at the consequences that we are facing today. Those ads were eliminated because they were targeting our youth, the lottery and casino ads are doing the same thing. If you have any doubt about this look at the effect on college campus related to gambling.

We need to look at the rehabilitation for problem gamblers and realize that we are not doing enough. This addiction is hidden from family, friends, and society, and costs people their lives. Just as any other addiction, it affects the entire family and can destroy everyone connected to the person with the addiction yet, as a society, we continue to ignore the fact that it is an addiction. People with a gambling addiction need rehab not jail,
need recovery not ridicule,
need hope not despair,
need a chance to get a life worth living not suicide.

There is a wonderful group that was just formed called "Recovering Gamblers", please call or e-mail to find out more information about what gambling does to people's lives. (860) 325-2013
info@recoveringgamblers.org

As much as I support all of the efforts you have put into the budget for services for people with disabilities, please take another look at an area that needs attention, the growing number of people that are addicted to gambling.

Thank you